



The Board of Park and Recreation Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, met at the Park and Recreation Administrative Office Building, located at 5841 Brookshire Blvd., Charlotte, NC 28216 at 6 p.m.

PRC MINUTES January 9, 2018

ATTENDANCE

PRC Present:

Elaine Powell, Chair
Heidi Pruess – Vice Chair
Tristan McMannis, Executive Secretary
Sterling Martin
Brian Cox
Peter Engels
John Leonard
Blanche Penn
Doug Burnett
Rick Winiker
Beth Cashion

PRC Absent:

Mary Foxx Johnson
Marc Seelinger

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 6:10 p.m. by Chair Elaine Powell, which was followed by the pledge of allegiance.

Welcome and Introductions:

Chair Powell welcomed all to the January 9, 2018 Park and Recreation Commission meeting. All commissioners introduced themselves, and shared the region they represent.

Chair Powell introduced and welcomed **Commissioner Beth Cashion**, newly appointed Park and Recreation Commissioner representing the Northern Towns. Beth was appointed by the Board of County Commissioners at their meeting held on December 19, 2017. She is filling an unexpired term, expiring on June 30, 2019.

Proclamations, Awards and Recognitions

Kendel Bryant Phillips: Deputy Director, Michael Kirschman and PRC Chair, Elaine Powell recognized and presented a service award to former Park and Recreation Commissioner, **Kendel Bryant Phillips**. Ms. Phillips served on the PRC from 2010 to 2017 and continues to serve on the North Park Region Citizen Advisory Council.

Timothy Turton: Division Director of Park Operations, Peter Cook, presented **Tim Turton** with a retirement award and shared many positive comments on Tim's service to the Department as Horticulture Manager. Tim worked for the Department from 2000 – 2017. His horticulture talent is present throughout all our parks across the County.

Public Appearance:

The following citizens appeared before the Park and Recreation Commission:

Alberenthious Stover: Ms. Stover is an active participant in the Senior Walkers program at Ivory Baker Recreation Center. She is looking for an opportunity to be involved with Park and Recreation.

Daryl Cherry: Recently relocated from New York City to Charlotte. He has been involved in Park and Recreation for the past 10 years as an employee with the City of NY Department of Parks and Recreation. Mr. Cherry is interested in learning the dynamics of the Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department as well as give input as a community member/professional. His hope is to eventually join the Department when the opportunity arises.

Staff Presentations:

Program Presentations:

Exhibits at Quest and Stevens Creek Nature Centers – Alice Chambers, Environmental Educator

Alice Chambers made a presentation on the planned exhibits for the new Quest Nature Center and the Stevens Creek Nature Center. The Quest portion of the presentation included information on:

- The Carolina Raptor Center Trail
- The overall floor plan/shared space
- The theme of the center “Nothing Survives Without Water”
- The various exhibit areas planned within the center
- The interactive exhibits planned for the center

The Stevens Creek portion of the presentation included information on:

- The overall floor plan
- The theme of the center “Life in the Watershed Hangs in the Balance”
- The various exhibit areas planned
- The interactive exhibits planned for the center such as the digital sandbox
- Research and study opportunities

Discussion ensued resulting in the following information:

- Admission to the Nature Centers will be free. Programs will have a fee.
- Working to increase field trips to Nature Centers by CMS
- Charlotte Water and Storm Water have provided information and education content but there is no partnership
- The Quest Nature Center will be a joint use facility with the Carolina Raptor Center
 - Only the Raptor Center programming staff will be moving to the Quest Nature Center
 - Raptor Center will manage the Gift Shop

- Mecklenburg County will manage renting
- There will be separate office space, separate and shared classroom space
- This is a County facility run by Park and Recreation staff
- 12,000 plus sf facility - \$6.5 million for the Quest Nature Center building
- The Raptor Center contributed \$1 million to the building. Lease for the Raptor Center will be based on the amount of square footage they control. Other funds raised by the Raptor Center will be used to rehab the Raptor Center Hospital and build the Raptor Trail
- With the use of video displays, panels and mobile features, the Nature Centers will be able to change the content and keep exhibits fresh.

Naming Application – Third Ward Park to “James Dennis Rash Third Ward Neighborhood Park”

Peter Cook, Division Director of Park Operations, returned to the PRC with the naming application submitted on behalf of The Committee to Restore and Preserve Third Ward, Inc., and at the request of its Chair, Virginia Woolard, to name Third Ward Park, located at 1001 W. 4th Street Extension, the “James Dennis Rash Third Ward Neighborhood Park” for PRC endorsement. The application was endorsed by the Central Advisory Council and the background check completed.

Motion was made by Commissioner Engels to endorse the naming of Third Ward Park to the “James Dennis Rash Third Ward Neighborhood Park”, which was seconded by Commissioner Martin and approved unanimously.

This naming application can be viewed here: [Third Ward Park to James Dennis Rash Third Ward Neighborhood Park](#) and will move forward to the BOCC to request a public hearing be set.

The Future of Skate Parks

The skate park community has been very active in their concerns regarding the need for more skate parks/plazas and have reached out to the PRC for guidance. They have been advised to begin by attending the next Athletics Advisory Council meeting on January 23, 2018. Because of their concerns, the Department felt it important to share information on skate parks to the PRC by providing an overview, the current skateboarding need and the Department’s plans for future skate parks.

Keisha Cox, Facility Manager at Naomi Drenan Recreation Center and Grayson Skate Park, along with Justin Klaus, Recreation Assistant, shared a presentation on the County’s only skate park, Grayson Skate Park, which opened in 2006. The presentation covered:

- Fees and memberships
- Programing (Board Art, Spring Skate Camp, Summer Camp)
- State statue regarding skateboarding
- Department/County rules
- Attendance

This presentation can be viewed here: [Grayson Skate Park](#)

Michael Kirschman, Deputy Director, shared 2016 survey findings and Lee Jones, Capital Planning Director, shared future plans for skate parks/plazas. Much discussion followed and resulted in the following information:

Rules and Regulations of Mecklenburg County Grayson Skate Park

- Fenced and manned by County policy (safety)
- Shirts required by County policy (safety)
- All participants must have a parent sign a waiver form (safety/risk)
- By State Statute, all participants must wear a helmet and knee and elbow pads (safety)
- Posting of the State Statute is all that is required, but for safety and risk management reasons, the County enforces the State Statute and fences and staffs the facility
- The County ordinance and State Statute regarding skateboarding would apply and be enforced for any future park/plaza built for skate boarding even if unmanned

Concerns/Desires from the Skateboard Community

- Would like more skate parks and/or skate plazas
- Do not want to wear safety equipment
- Would like to skate without a shirt
- Would like no fees

Successes

- Private lessons, group lessons, spring break sessions and summer camps
- Offer free lessons once a parent signs and loaner safety equipment donated by local skate shops
- Photography and videography opportunities
- GoPro footage of kids skating
- Keep up with the trends
- Partner with CMS to bring interested kids to the skate park
- Neighborhood kids come and spectate

Challenges for Staff

- Keeping all participants compliant with State Statute
- Obtaining parent signed waivers
- Getting neighborhood kids involved (parent signed waiver and safety equipment)
- Protecting our urban parks from skate damage (installed skate stops)

Skate Community Demographics

- The demographics include an older population that are more interested in skateboard plazas/urban style skate areas.

2016 Survey Findings

- Skate parks are a lower need (8%) as compared to other needs, but clearly a need for the skate community.

Current and Future Skate Park Plans and Funding Challenges

- Over the past several years the Department has met with the skate community and began to work on an idea for a half acre skate plaza at Bryant Park located at the corner of Freedom and Morehead. However, Bryant Park is not in the current CIP FY19-23 and there is no identified capital funding for a skate park. Moving forward on this project before the next CIP would require a public/private partnership.
- The Master Plan for the Hucks Road Park includes a skate amenity but will have to be included in a future phase. (The skate amenity was not ranked among the top priorities for amenities for Phase I).
- The approximate cost of a ½ acre skate park is \$1.5 million. 12 years ago, Grayson Skate Park was a \$700,000 project.

- Keisha Cox continues to apply for NRPA grants to revamp the tennis courts at Naomi Drenan into a beginner skate plaza.
- For safety reasons, temporary skate amenities would not be allowed to be built on park property. The Department would also not allow temporary amenities to be built by any other user group.
- A quality skate amenity will depend on future capital funding.

Opportunities for the Skate Community

- Seek support and lobby to the BOCC for funding of skate amenities.
- Develop public/private funding opportunities.
- Participate in community meetings for upcoming regional parks to advocate for a skate amenity in these parks (Ezell Farms, Eastway Regional Park, Hucks Road Park).

Park and Recreation Commission Priorities

Adequate Funding:

Greenway Advisory Council Greenway Recommendation: Commissioner Winiker shared concerns from the Greenway Advisory Council with respect to the pace at which the Greenway is being built out. The Department currently has 47 miles of existing greenway, 21 miles under construction or design and 28 miles funded in the FY19-23 CIP. The Greenway Advisory Council feels this pace is too slow considering the growing population and increasing demands for a connected greenway system. The Greenway Advisory Council proposed the following resolution for the Park and Recreation Commission to consider endorsing and moving forward to the BOCC:



MECKLENBURG COUNTY
Park and Recreation Department

Greenway Advisory Citizen's Counsel

At a meeting of the Greenway Advisory Citizen's Council this day, by unanimous vote, the following resolution was approved for consideration by the Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Commission:

A connected Mecklenburg County Greenway network would have a significant, positive impact on the economic development, transportation options, and health and welfare of the citizens of Mecklenburg County. The County currently has 47 miles of existing greenway, 21 under construction or in design and 28 miles funded in the FY19-23 CIP.

The Greenway Advisory Council respectfully requests the members of the Park and Recreation Commission advise and request that the Mecklenburg County Board of County Commissioners take appropriate actions to cause 150 miles of a connected greenway network to be constructed and complete by 2030 and an entire 200-mile system by 2035.

The GAC recommends the following be observed in executing these goals:

- *Restructure existing CIP funding for greenways and provide an accelerated, different funding model to accomplish this goal*
- *Hire adequate staff in Park and Recreation, land acquisition, and asset & facilities management to*

accomplish this goal

- *20-25 miles of greenway always be in design or construction*
- *Partner with all municipalities in the county to coordinate this network with future municipality trails and pedestrian and bike transportation routes*
- *Ensure the citizens of Mecklenburg County have an adequate opportunity to provide input on future greenway plans*

This the 8th day of January 2018.

Doug Burnett, Co-Chair and Park and Recreation Commissioner Rick Winiker, Co-Chair and Park and Recreation Commissioner

Discussion followed and the following motion was made:

Motion was made by Commissioner Cox to:

1. Endorse the Greenway Advisory Council's vision of a 200-mile connected greenway network to be constructed and complete by 2035;
2. Request staff to investigate the feasibility of including the Mecklenburg County Greenway System in the County's Capital Improvement Program as an individual long-range project with approved funding available to any portion or phase of the system;
3. Consider at its February 2018 retreat a resolution regarding a future greenway planning and funding strategy for submission to the Board of County Commissioners.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Pruess and approved unanimously.

Land Preservation

Exotic Invasive Plant Species Do Not Purchase List: A link to this list was included in the November 9, 2017 meeting minutes and can be viewed here: [Exotic Invasive Plant Species](#).

Motion was made by Commissioner Pruess to request all Park and Recreation contracts include the Exotic Invasive Plant Species Do Not Purchase List as produced by the Mecklenburg Soil and Water Conservation Office and to request the Stewardship Advisory Council investigate invasive plant species solutions and present any recommendations to the Park and Recreation Commission which was seconded by Commissioner McMannis and approved unanimously.

Active Community Engagement

"On the Table" Synopsis: Terri Stowers, Division Director of Community and Recreation Center Services, shared some of the outcomes from one of the two "On the Table" conversations hosted by Park and Recreation. "On the Table" was a day of community conversations across Charlotte sponsored by the Knight Foundation and the Foundation for the Carolinas. On October 25, 2017, Park and Recreation hosted two conversations, one in the morning at the Tyvola Senior Center and one in the evening at the Ivory Baker Recreation Center. Outcomes from all the conversations across Charlotte were sent to the Foundation for the Carolinas to be compiled into a report. Terri shared the following outcomes, concerns and action from the "On the Table" conversation held at the Tyvola Senior Center:

1. **Transportation:** Transportation is provided by DSS from the Charlotte Housing Authority Senior High Rises to our Senior Centers but the seniors are not using the service. Park and Recreation has coordinated with the Charlotte Housing Authority and DSS to arrange for staff to provide on-site programing at the Senior High Rises once a month. The hope is that the seniors will get to know our staff and become comfortable enough to use the transportation to the Senior Centers.

2. **Mental Health:** Terri took a Mental Health First Aid course through Novant and plans to seek guidance from DSS and Area Mental Health for other mental health training opportunities for staff.

Update Re: Arts and Science Council Culture Blocks Funding for Senior Field Trips:

Because of the concerns expressed by several of our senior citizens and by Commissioner Penn at the November 9, 2017 PRC meeting, in opposition of the \$5.00 transportation fee associated with senior field trips, it was suggested by Commissioner Leonard that the ASC Cultural Blocks initiative might be an option to explore for help with this transportation fee. Terri Stowers reported that this has since been discussed with the ASC, however, the intent of the Cultural Blocks initiative is to bring the arts out to communities considered to be "culture deserts". The current programming/funding cycle has already been determined but they are open to considering this in the future.

Commissioner Penn asked to understand what the \$5.00 fee is for and felt that the Department should look for a way to eliminate this charge.

Terri Stowers shared that the Department has definite policies and procedures for determining pricing for programs and these will be addressed in further detail at the March 13 PRC meeting.

Saturday Basketball Schedules for Special Olympics: Terri Stowers responded to complaints received by the PRC regarding the Special Olympics basketball schedule at Marion Diehl. These complaints were from the Special Olympic coaches regarding the time change for gym use from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. to 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Special Olympics basketball is a joint program with Park and Recreation's Therapeutic Division and the Special Olympics.

Prior to basketball season, Park and Recreation staff met with Greg Morrill, Mecklenburg County Director of Special Olympics, to discuss how to better serve these clients. With lower participant numbers and increased struggles with obesity, it was agreed that Park and Recreation would offer a Zumba Class to the Special Olympic basketball players from 8 a.m. to 9 a.m. and basketball from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. This change in schedule did not get communicated to the Special Olympic coaches. Mr. Morrill has since communicated the change and written a letter of apology to the Department for the miscommunication.

Pro-Rating Complaint: Terri Stowers also addressed a complaint to the PRC regarding refusal to prorate a 3-day out of school time program. By policy the Department does not prorate the cost of any program.

Memorial Stadium Update Re: Community Engagement: Lee Jones, Division Director of Capital Planning, shared the community engagement process for the Memorial Stadium project:

- Notify the community in advance
- Schedule a time for key stakeholders to meet and talk about goals and concerns
- Project updates communicated on a regular basis
- Opportunity for key stakeholders to participate on the steering committee
- Community engagement will be advertised through our website, mailings, e-mailings and direct contact
- Include the Elizabeth community, Charlotte DOT, CPCC, Veterans and the Greenway Advisory Council

Active Community Engagement

PRC Retreat- Saturday, February 3, 2018: The PRC Retreat is a required meeting and will take place on Saturday, February 3, 2018 at the Williamson Pavilion at Hornet's Nest Park. The retreat begins at 8:30 a.m. and ends at 4 p.m.

All Advisory Council Meeting – February 13, 2018: There will be a meeting of the PRC and members of all the Citizen Advisory Councils on February 13. The meeting will be held at the Bette Rae Thomas Recreation Center at 6 p.m. All PRC were encouraged to provide items they or their Advisory Councils would like to include on the agenda.

Advisory Council Appointments/Reappointments:

South: **Motion was made** by Commissioner Burnett to appoint **Roberta Houston** to an unexpired term, expiring 6/2020 and to appoint **Erin Lapham** to an unexpired term, expiring 6/2018, which was seconded by Commissioner Winiker and approved unanimously.

Sr. Citizens: **Motion was made** by Commissioner McMannis to appoint **April Barnes** as an agency representative of the Council on Aging to an unexpired term, expiring 6/2019, which was seconded by Commissioner Engels and approved unanimously.

Stewardship: **Motion was made** by Commissioner Pruess to appoint **Russell Keanini** to an unexpired term, expiring 6/2020, which was seconded by Commissioner Burnett and approved unanimously.

Greenway: **Motion was made** by Commissioner Burnett to increase the membership on the Greenway Advisory Council from 9 to 10 and to appoint **Ed Barnhart** to an unexpired term, expiring 6/2018, which was seconded by Commissioner Winiker and approved unanimously.

Director's Report

Michael Kirschman, Deputy Director, reported on the following:

- Plans are in the works to re-configure the PRC meeting space at the AOB into a better and more versatile arrangement
- Liz Morrell, the new Management Analyst, was introduced.

Leslie Johnson, Assistant County Manager and Interim Director of Park and Recreation, expressed her appreciation on behalf of the County Manager and the Board of County Commissioners for the PRC's valuable input and perspective as it relates to the voice of the community.

PRC Chair Report:

PRC Retreat: The retreat will be from 8:30 to 4. All PRC were encouraged to read all e-mails as it relates to the Greenway Advisory Council resolution. It will be important to be prepared so that this can be addressed in a timely manner at the retreat.

The retreat will be facilitated by Ed Gagnon of Customer Service Solutions, Inc. and will include addressing the frustrations of the Park and Recreation Commission. Chair Elaine Powell expressed the following to the Board of County Commissioners:

I have been and will be discussing the importance of receiving and listening to citizen input. Some of us have become increasingly frustrated and disheartened as we volunteer hundreds of hours every year and are being left out of the loop with increased frequency. I think it would be a great idea to have input from the advisory boards and commission listed on the BOCC agenda

for every important action item that comes to the BOCC. We all know that the BOCC makes the final decision, but I think listening to citizen input is vital in our democracy. It's past time for us to stop begging to be heard. We deserve to be heard.

Consent Items

Motion was made was made by Commissioner Cox to approve the PRC minutes of November 9, 2017 and all Advisory Council minutes, which was seconded by Commissioner Martin and approved unanimously.

PRC Reports and Requests

Commissioner Penn: Participated in Kwanza at one of the Recreation Center. Visited several Recreation Centers. Inquired about a "for sale" sign on the school at the David B. Waymer site in Huntersville. Terri Stowers responded that the school is owned by the Historic Landmarks Commission.

Commissioner Leonard: Plans to inquire about the progress of projects that may appear to be stagnant to provide understanding to South Advisory Council members.

Commissioner Martin: Happy to have Commissioner Cashion on the Park and Recreation Commission.

Administrative Support: The annual report of the PRC to the BOCC will be at the first BOCC meeting in November, now and going forward.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m

